



## Introduction

# 1 INTRODUCTION



Coastal Prairie below Peaked Hill, Source: EDAW 2003

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE PARK

### 1.1.1 LOCATION AND SETTING OF THE PARK

Located approximately 70 miles north of San Francisco, Sonoma Coast State Beach (Sonoma Coast SB) comprises a series of beaches, separated by rocky bluffs and headlands, and an inland valley that draw millions of visitors year-round. Sonoma Coast SB extends 19 miles from Bodega Head at the southern end to beyond the Vista Trail 4 miles north of Jenner (Exhibit 1-1) and encompasses 6,218 acres of land, 19 miles of coastline, and 667 acres of the ocean (leased from the State Lands Commission), for a total of 6,885 acres. The 2,226-acre Willow Creek subunit of Sonoma Coast SB encompasses the lower half of the Willow Creek Watershed, a major tributary to the Russian River.

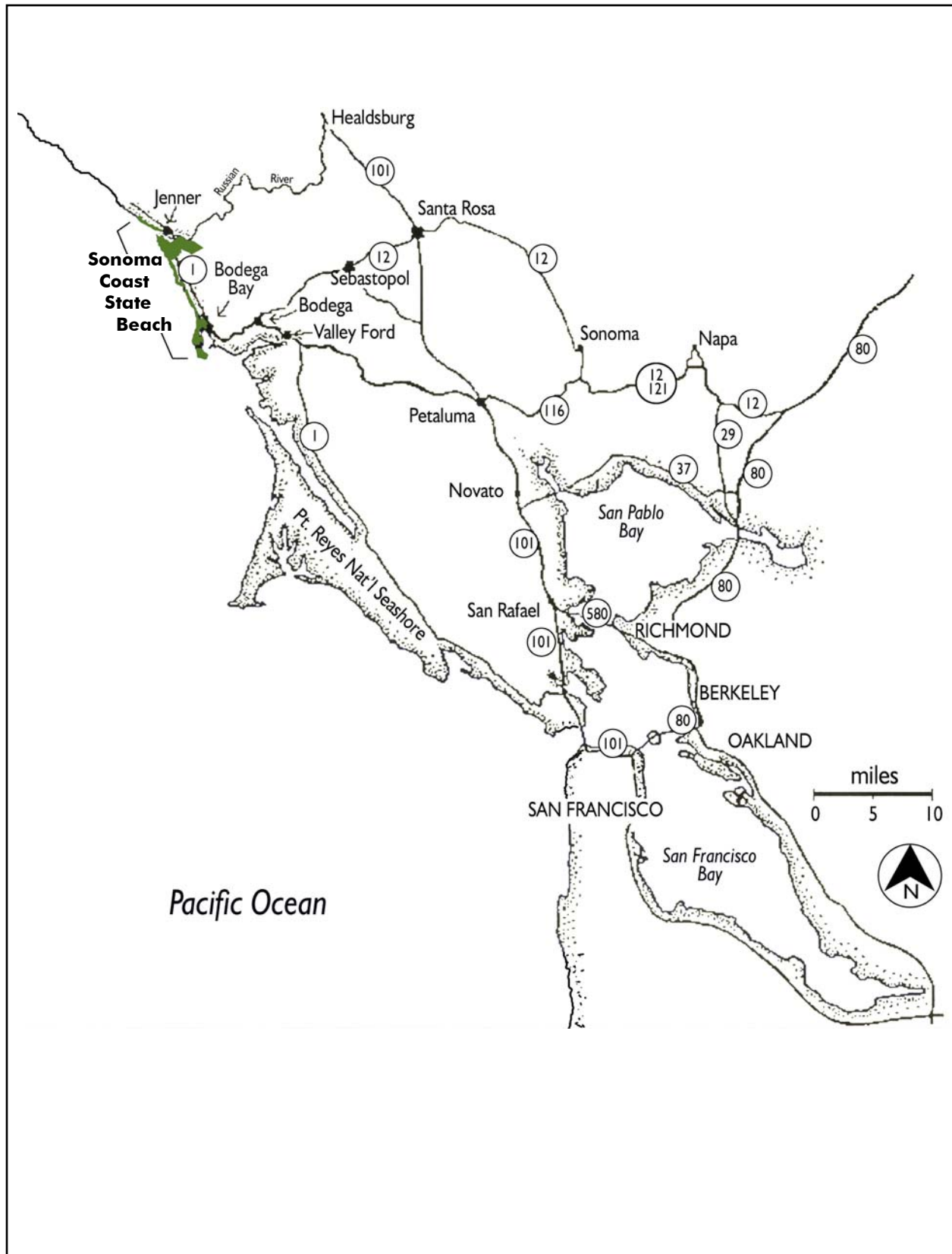
Beachcombers, fishermen, sunbathers and picnickers can access the beaches and sea cliffs from more than two dozen points along State Route 1.

### 1.1.2 PURPOSE FOR ACQUIRING THE PARK

Sonoma Coast SB was acquired in 1934 and was classified as a state beach in 1964. The purpose of Sonoma Coast SB is “to make available to the people, for their inspiration and enjoyment forever, a segment of the scenic Northern California coastline in the vicinity of Bodega Bay and the Russian River, embracing sandy beaches, tide pools, and rugged headlands; together with all the scenic, historic, scientific, and recreational resources of the area” (Declaration of Purpose 1964). Since the original acquisition (approximately 600 acres), several significant adjacent properties have been purchased as additions to Sonoma Coast SB.

### 1.1.3 SPIRIT OF PLACE

For thousands of years, people have been captured by the visual masterpiece and natural wonder of the Sonoma Coast. The coast leaves an intense and lingering imprint on all who have witnessed this magical realm. The rugged landscape sparks the imagination of those contemplating the awesome powers of geologic forces. For others, the dramatic scenery is



Source: EDAW 2003

## Regional Location of Sonoma Coast State Beach

EXHIBIT 1-1

Sonoma Coast State Beach General Plan  
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**EDAW**

the perfect backdrop for a day at the beach. Still others are intrigued by the plants and wildlife that have adapted to this unique environment over the eons.

Born of the clash between land and sea, the rivalry between the North American and Pacific tectonic plates, and the symbiosis between living beings and the environment, the Sonoma Coast is painted with a palette of distinctive vegetation on a canvass of rolling hills, rugged cliffs, sloping prairies, and broad beaches. Sprinkled about are jagged rock outcroppings and other reminders that agents of change are ever-present in the timeless ambience. Of these agents of change, the San Andreas Fault is perhaps the most famous. But it is the impact of modern society that is most considerable.

As Sonoma Coast SB continues its path in the modern era of leisure and preservation, the stewardship of the coastline is pivotal in maintaining a balance between an pristine vision of the Sonoma Coast as it once was naturally and an alterative extreme of a natural playground that it could be. Aesthetic quality, resource values, and recreational opportunities are inseparable characteristics that are the basis of attraction to Sonoma Coast SB. To preserve all three is to sustain the popularity of Sonoma Coast SB.

#### 1.1.4 REGIONAL PLANNING CONTEXT

##### SONOMA COUNTY GENERAL PLAN AND LOCAL COASTAL PLAN

Sonoma Coast SB is located within the planning areas of the Sonoma County General Plan (County General Plan) and Local Coastal Plan (LCP). While the County General Plan does not apply to State-owned properties such as Sonoma Coast SB, the LCP is applicable as Sonoma Coast SB lies within the designated Coastal Zone. Both the County General Plan



Fog Bank at Willow Creek



Goat Rock



Coastline at Arched Rock



Sunset at Sonoma Coast SB

Source: EDAW 2003

and the LCP directly affect the surrounding land use and thereby the context of Sonoma Coast SB.

The Sonoma County LCP was most recently updated and adopted in 2001. Another update of the LCP is expected by 2005. The LCP contains the local land use zone map and the zoning ordinances, which define the land uses that may occur in the unincorporated areas of the county if the properties are not federally owned. The existing LCP, which is based primarily on data collected in 1979 for the preparation of the previous LCP, includes maps on biological, cultural, and visual resources in the coastal zone of the county, as well as geologic hazards.

A smaller portion of Sonoma Coast SB is located in the County General Plan area outside the LCP. The broad purpose of the County General Plan is to express policies that will guide decisions on future growth and development. Specific plans, area plans, zonings, subdivisions, local agency projects and other local land use decisions must be consistent with the County General Plan.

The County General Plan includes many elements that guide various facets of growth and development within the county. The elements most applicable to the Sonoma Coast SB planning process include the Land Use, Open Space, Resource Conservation, and Circulation and Transit elements. The Land Use element describes where the different kinds of uses for land may be established in the unincorporated areas of Sonoma County. The Open Space element designates various portions of the county in several open space classifications. The limitations on types and intensities of permissible uses and special development and permit review requirements are expressed in the text for each open space classification. In the Resource Conservation element, policies are expressed for managed production and conservation of various resources, including soils, water, forests and timber, vegetation and wildlife, fisheries and harbors, geothermal, mineral and energy, atmospheric resources, and air quality. In the Circulation and Transit element, the plans for the county's future highway and transit systems are described (County of Sonoma 1989).

Sonoma County is currently updating its General Plan, which was last updated in 1989. The new General Plan, with a planning horizon to 2020, is expected to be adopted in 2004.

#### **NEARBY CITY GENERAL PLANS**

The nearest incorporated cities are Sebastopol and Santa Rosa. The City of Sebastopol General Plan was adopted in 1994, and the City of Santa Rosa General Plan was adopted on June 18, 2002. Because the boundaries of these cities do not extend to properties in the immediate vicinity of Sonoma Coast SB, they do not directly affect Sonoma Coast SB and the surrounding land uses.

The smaller unincorporated communities within or adjacent to Sonoma Coast SB, including Bodega Bay, Duncans Mills, and Jenner, do not have their own general plans and are subject to the Sonoma County General Plan and LCP described above.

## **1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS GENERAL PLAN**

### **1.2.1 GENERAL PLAN AND THE STATE PARK PLANNING PROCESS**

General plans are broad-based policy documents that provide management guidelines for a park by defining a framework for implementing diverse missions of resource stewardship, interpretation, and visitor use and services. By legal mandate, every State Park in California must develop a general plan prior to approval of major developments. The plan defines the purpose, vision, and long-term goals and guidelines for the management of Sonoma Coast SB. A general plan is not a project specific document, and typically does not define specific objectives, methodologies and designs on how to accomplish its goals.

General planning provides opportunities to assess Sonoma Coast SB resource stewardship, its facility development and management, and its interpretation to the public. It provides guidelines for future land use management and designation, including land acquisition and the facilities required to accommodate expected increases in visitation.

The general plan provides a comprehensive framework that guides the Park's developments, ongoing management and public use for the next 20 years or more. Because it is in effect for so long, the plan must remain consistent in the vision for the Park's future, general in its scope, and flexible in its proposed approaches for solving future management problems.

### **1.2.2 SUBSEQUENT PLANNING ACTIONS**

Major programs and projects that will be implemented during the lifespan of the general plan will require additional planning. Future planning efforts may include the preparation of specific resource management plans to protect sensitive resources or the development of site-specific areas development plans for new facilities to determine how they will relate to their surrounding.

Future planning efforts also include the preparation of project-specific environmental compliance documents for implementation of management plans and subsequent development projects. These documents should tier off and be consistent with the General Plan's Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Securing any permits required for future implementation projects would also be part of subsequent planning actions.

Finally, the general plan may need to be amended if new developments or major commitments of resources are proposed for areas not covered in this plan or if circumstances change, making facts and findings in this plan no longer accurate.

### **1.2.3 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Public input is an important component of the general planning process. It is sought at the very beginning and throughout the planning process for a variety of reasons. State Parks are entrusted by the people of California to the Department for managing natural and cultural resources and for providing recreational opportunity. Constituency building is needed to

ensure the public's support for their local Parks. A variety of methods, such as public meetings, and user surveys were used to identify stakeholders of Sonoma Coast SB and the general plan and to identify their needs and concerns for the future of Sonoma Coast SB.

Local residents and stakeholders as well as specific user group may also be able to provide important information about Sonoma Coast SB that is not common knowledge and not contained in Sonoma Coast SB Data File.

Finally, all general plans have an amendment/revision process built into them, allowing the plans to be flexible if new situations arise.

### **1.3 CONTENTS OF THE GENERAL PLAN**

#### **1.3.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The existing conditions section of the plan describes the current physical and social conditions of Sonoma Coast SB. It includes information on land use; significant physical, biotic, cultural, aesthetic, and recreation values; and existing facilities. The existing conditions section also lists system-wide and regional planning influences affecting Sonoma Coast SB, describes its demographic resident and visitor profile, and lists issues to be addressed in the General Plan that have been identified during the early phases of the planning process. Input for the existing conditions section has been gathered through a variety of sources including:

- ▶ review of Sonoma Coast SB data file,
- ▶ review of other applicable technical documents,
- ▶ review of local and regional applicable planning documents,
- ▶ database searches,
- ▶ limited fieldwork,
- ▶ contact with agencies and other knowledgeable individuals, and
- ▶ user surveys and public meetings.

#### **1.3.2 PLAN SECTIONS**

The "Plan" component of the General Plan (Chapter 3) for Sonoma Coast SB contains the following sections:

- ▶ Purpose and Vision
- ▶ Park-wide Goals and Guidelines
- ▶ Park Carrying Capacity
- ▶ Park Management Zones

#### **1.3.3 PROGRAM ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

The Program EIR contained in the General Plan (Chapter 4) includes the following sections:

- ▶ Introduction to the Environmental Analysis
- ▶ Summary

- ▶ Project Description
- ▶ Environmental Setting
- ▶ Environmental Effects Eliminated from Further Analysis
- ▶ Environmental Impacts
- ▶ Other CEQA Considerations
- ▶ Alternatives to the Proposed Project

In addition to these sections, the General Plan environmental analysis section contains a list of the organizations and persons consulted during its preparation, the report preparers, a complete list of references, a glossary of terms, technical appendices, exhibits, and tables.

Volume II of the General Plan and EIR contains all public comments received during the circulation of the draft EIR, responses to these comments, mitigation monitoring plan, and additional appendices, as applicable. (Volume II will be provided after the draft EIR is circulated to the public.)

#### **1.3.4 PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM EIR**

The purpose of the Program EIR is to analyze and disclose the preferred alternative's effects on the environment. It discloses any significant and potentially significant effects that may result from the implementation of the General Plan. The EIR informs decision-makers and the public about the environmental consequences of the adoption of the General Plan, consistent with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and State CEQA Guidelines.

#### **1.3.5 PROGRAM EIR SCOPE**

Because the EIR prepared for the General Plan is programmatic in scope, it does not contain project-specific analysis for any of the projects recommended in the General Plan. Specific projects will undergo subsequent CEQA review in the future as described above under "Subsequent Planning Actions."